



Office of Management's Monthly Newsletter

The Beacon

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Ronald Hicks, Deputy Administrator

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bea- con (bê' ken) *noun*

A signaling or guiding device, such as a lighthouse, located on a coast. A source of guidance or

RON'S CORNER

The Beacon in Its Fourth Year *by Tom Billy, FSIS Administrator*

This issue of the *Beacon* marks the beginning of our fourth year of publication. During that time, you have seen this newsletter grow into a valuable resource providing news on current Agency activities and information on changes that effect your work life. As the *Beacon* has grown, so has the list of contributors from the Office of Management and other agency programs in providing you with quality service and expertise. Last fall, we began including articles on "FSIS Workforce of the Future" issues.

Beginning with this new volume, we plan to expand our coverage to include regular updates on the implementation of HACCP as well as status reports on the slaughter plant pilots (i.e., the HACCP Inspection Models Project (HIMP)). We hope you will find the articles timely and informative, so that you are aware of and understand the future direction of FSIS as you progress through your career.

Together with the *Thursday Report* and information transmitted by the Workforce of the Future Steering Committee, you can consider the *Beacon* as an authoritative and reliable resource on Agency news that effects your employment with FSIS. We are committed to providing you with the best

information available in a clear and concise way.

We are making the *Beacon* available from a variety of sources. Currently, it is mailed to all FSIS employees at their work location. It is also electronically accessible (along with the *Thursday Report*) in an Outlook public folder under "Newsletters". For those with Internet capabilities, the *Beacon* is published on the FSIS Office of Management website at the address printed in the masthead. Supervisors are encouraged to make these newsletters available to employees under their supervision and provide answers to any questions.

As always, your feedback is essential in keeping this newsletter on target in serving your needs. Using whatever mechanism works best for you, either e-mail, fax, telephone, or a letter, we are soliciting your comments on the *Beacon*. You can send them to the author of the article or to the e-mail address printed on the above masthead. In the July issue, we plan to publish a brief reader survey to gather your input and help us keep on target.

The following articles by the Workforce of the Future launch our expanded communications effort. Please read this information carefully, and if you have questions or need clarification, you can contact any member of the Workforce of the Future or send an e-mail to the "Workforce of the Future" Outlook mailbox.

WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

Workforce of the Future
Focus on: Verifying and Extending the HACCP Approach
by: Yvonne Davis, Chair
Workforce of the Future Steering Committee
Telephone: 202-720-6617

HACCP Verification

Now that the 1996 final rule on Pathogen Reduction and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point systems (PR/HACCP) has been implemented in the Nation's meat and poultry plants, the Agency is beginning in-depth verification reviews to verify how well the meat and poultry industry has implemented the new approach. Ongoing evaluation is essential to long-term success of this dramatic new regulatory approach.

In the future, Consumer Safety Officers with the appropriate scientific background and analytical

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skills may conduct in-depth reviews. However, until the Agency is able to implement that occupation in its workforce, FSIS plans to use teams drawing on the expertise of the Technical Service Center and field and HQ employees with a mix of scientific skills. (These teams will not include bargaining unit personnel until a proposal has been provided to the NJC on training these personnel.) A large number of employees have asked about the status of the CSO initiative and about needed qualifications. "In the mail" is a letter to all employees transmitting the report to Congress, qualifications for the CSO, and the Agency's guiding principles for the transition to the workforce of the future.

FSIS is laying the groundwork to be able to advertise 50 CSO positions internally before September 30, but we cannot yet confirm when or if those advertisements will be out. We most definitely will not advertise the positions without clear signals from Congress and the satisfactory completion of union negotiations. That is because last year, more than 100 FSIS employees were greatly inconvenienced by applying for vacant positions we had to cancel after Congress added a provision to the FY 2000 appropriations bill directing us not to hire Consumer Safety Officers.

Extending the HACCP Approach

FSIS is also working on projects that apply PR/HACCP concepts to other Agency regulatory responsibilities. Some of these projects will be completed in the short term; others may require several years. As FSIS, FDA and state and local food safety and health officials systematically examine the farm-to-table food safety system, they will also continue to identify links that need strengthening -- just as a plant assesses potential hazards that need to be addressed in its HACCP plan. Pilot projects are one way to explore how best to strengthen those links -- just as a plant

develops a HACCP plan to control and prevent identified hazards, and then validates its plan.

Eggs and Egg Products

The President's Council on Food Safety identified egg safety as a food safety public health issue warranting immediate federal interagency action. In December 1999, USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) jointly released an egg safety action plan to improve food safety from production to consumption. FSIS has had authority for egg products inspection since the 1994 Departmental reorganization, which constitutes almost 100 egg products inspectors (processed product inspectors) in our workforce. The Food and Drug Administration within HHS has long had authority for shell egg safety. The ultimate goal of the egg safety action plan is elimination of eggs as a food vehicle for the bacteria. The interim goal is, by 2005, a 50 percent reduction in egg-associated illnesses caused by *Salmonella enteritidis*.

After publishing the action plan, FSIS and FDA formed a National Standards Workgroup, including representatives from both agencies and from several states. The Workgroup developed an outline of components from farm to table, including verification and enforcement, that may need to be addressed in developing national standards for food safety. Public meetings were held in March and April, and comments were accepted through April 20. The National Standards Workgroup is now using the information from the public meetings and written comments to draft proposed national standards for egg producers, shell egg packers and egg products processors. The two agencies hope to publish the draft standards, for public comment, by December 2000, and to begin rulemaking in FY 2001. It is too early to anticipate how changes in egg safety could affect the FSIS workforce of the future in FY 2002

or later, but the WOFSC will closely track egg safety activities over the next few months to identify potential impacts.

HACCP-Based Inspection Models Project (HIMP)

A letter to all employees on this project to apply HACCP to slaughter activities was sent in March 2000, and the HIMP project was discussed in the May 2000 Workforce of the Future article in the *Beacon*. To briefly recap, FSIS has established performance standards for food safety and non-food safety (other consumer protection) conditions that slaughter plants must meet. In order to meet those standards, the 24 volunteer plants in the project must extend their HACCP systems (to address the food safety conditions) and must develop slaughter process control plans to address the non-food safety, "other consumer protection" conditions. Only plants that slaughter exclusively young, healthy, uniform animals may participate.

In the HIMP plants, FSIS inspectors focus on verifying that the plant has indeed controlled the slaughter process effectively. They conduct both oversight inspection and verification inspection to ensure that plants are meeting regulatory requirements and are producing food that is safe for consumers. Plants are responsible for identifying and removing carcasses that do not meet the standards. However, because there has been some confusion about it, it is important to emphasize that FSIS Consumer Safety Inspectors in the HIMP model plants retain the authority to prevent adulterated poultry or animals from moving into consumer channels. About 220 FSIS employees are currently assigned to the models plants.

FSIS has contracted with Research Triangle Institute, an independent consulting firm, to collect baseline microbiological and organoleptic (sight, smell, and touch) data as

volunteer plants enter the project. Once each plant has transitioned to the extended HACCP system and new plant controls and slaughter inspection procedures, RTI again collects microbiological and organoleptic data. This data would have to be the same as or better than the baseline data in order for FSIS to consider the new system successful. To implement a HACCP-based approach in slaughter and inspection, FSIS would first have to go through the rulemaking process and, if successful, engage in union negotiations. The earliest implementation could occur would be the beginning of Fiscal Year 2002 (the fall of 2001).

FSIS employees have expressed diverse reactions to the HIMP project. (See following article.)

In the long run, the Agency believes implementation of HACCP in slaughter would reduce our need for lower-graded slaughter inspection positions. Currently, however, FSIS is having difficulty recruiting enough slaughter inspectors to meet our needs. We are pleased to report that the Office of Personnel Management has approved the Agency's request for temporary authority to waive the salary reduction for civilian re-employed annuitants -- specifically for in-plant Veterinary Medical Officers and Food Inspectors. The case-by-case waiver authority can only be used as a last resort in locations with an emergency hiring need due to severe recruiting difficulty or workforce transition. A number of conditions apply and the Director, USDA Office of Human Resources Management, must approve all requests. Nevertheless, FSIS hopes that this waiver will be an aid in chronic staffing problems and is working out procedural issues, including providing a proposal for review and comment to the NJC.

In-Distribution Inspection Pilot.

On June 9, the Agency will hold a public meeting on its small In-

Distribution Inspection pilot, which began in February 2000 with 11 Consumer Safety Inspectors in four locations -- Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Virginia and Alabama.

Nyoka Chandler, who describes herself as "the only IDI in Alabama," wrote to correct the error in the May *Beacon*, which incorrectly listed Kansas rather than Alabama as an IDI location. Chandler notes that she has performed more than 100 reviews and has notified Compliance Officers of violations observed, for appropriate follow-up. CSIs in the IDI pilot also conduct recall effectiveness checks, collect *E. coli* O157:H7 samples, and respond to consumer complaints. The idea is that assistance on these important activities will free Compliance Officers to focus more on active enforcement, in plants, in distribution and (in concert with FDA and state authorities) at retail.

If in-distribution inspection of one type or another ultimately is implemented, this would provide upward mobility opportunities for interested slaughter inspectors, and it would be a candidate pool for future Compliance Officers.

Employee Voices on the HACCP-Based Inspection Models Project: It's working!

Eleven FSIS inspectors participating in the HACCP Inspection Models Project (HIMP) wrote to Administrator Billy to "show and verify our FULL AND TOTAL support for the new HACCP Inspection Models Project." The inspectors state their view that the pilot is working for the following reasons:

"(1) Many more checks are being performed now than before on finished product, through our verification duties.

(2) Under our constant and direct observation inspection, the plant sorters, in our opinion, are doing an excellent job of removing

unwholesome product from the slaughter lines.

(3) Our ability to find non-compliances has been greatly expanded from the limited 3-foot work area of a line inspector to the total area of the slaughter line.

(4) We feel that this is the future of inspection, and truly the best way to protect the public from food safety concerns.

(5) Our sore backs and wrists are now healing. Many of us have had operations for carpal tunnel syndrome, etc., due to the repetitive nature of our previous job, in which no rotation of duties was possible. This has been eliminated with the new duties under the pilot program. THANK YOU!"

We are requesting your comments on the implementation of HACCP and the Models Project for publication in future articles in the *Beacon*. Your feedback is important to us, and the *Beacon* can provide a forum for your input.

VEHICLES

Increased Fuel Costs

by Brian McNiff

Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 301-504-4221

It is certainly no news to anyone that gasoline prices have been increasing for the past six months. One of the benefits of driving a GSA Fleet vehicle is that our agency is protected from such price fluctuations. Each GSA vehicle comes with a Fleet Services card with which drivers purchase gasoline and other vehicle related services. GSA pays all fuel and maintenance costs with the revenue generated by the fixed monthly and mileage rates our agency is billed. This allows us to budget the government vehicle expenditures in advance, while GSA takes most of the risk of price instability.

In an effort to keep costs of the government vehicles from rising, the Fleet Management Staff has asked that all drivers of government vehicles do their part as well. All drivers are to refuel at self-service pumps whenever possible, and avoid the use of gasoline with a higher octane than the vehicle requires. All vehicles leased by our agency should not use any fuel other than regular unleaded gasoline, which is normally 87 octane. In no case should a driver pump premium fuel into their assigned vehicle.

Vehicle Maintenance

All government vehicle drivers are reminded that upon receipt of the GSA Form 3478 (Motor Vehicle Service Authorization) arrangements must be made to have the required maintenance performed by the requested due date. Prior to having any unscheduled maintenance performed, you must call the Maintenance Control Center (MCC). The MCC number is 1-888-622-6344.

Monthly Mileage Reports

All personnel driving government vehicles are reminded that they are required to report their monthly mileage upon receipt of the GSA Form 494. By completing this form upon receipt our agency can avoid estimated billings. If any driver is not receiving the monthly GSA Form 494, you are to contact the servicing Fleet Management Center that issued you the vehicle. The FMC will check to see if the correct address and designated point of contact is correct.

SUPPLIES

Egg Products Cable Tanker Seals Now Available - Unit of Issue Change

by Pete Bridgeman

Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 301-504-4222

The new self-locking cable-type Egg Products Tanker Seals are now in stock and available for order from the Landover Service Center. The Item Number is still FSIS-EPI-01, but the Unit of Issue has changed from HD (100) to PKG10 (Package of 10). All Egg Products Inspection customer accounts have been issued 10 packages (total of 100) of the new seals.

We'd like to thank Inspector David Van Dyke, Jr., from Zanesville, OH, in the Pickerington District, for his suggestion that brought this solution to the Tanker Seal problem to our attention, and for his follow-up efforts that helped tremendously towards making his idea a reality. Way to go, David!

Relief from Heat on the Line

We're please to announce that we recently began stocking 2 different items designed to help provide relief to inspectors on the slaughter lines in extreme heat conditions. These items are Neck Cooling Scarves, item number FSIS-68, Unit of Issue "DZ" (dozen per pack), and Sqwinchers, Item Numbers FSIS-69-LL (Lemon-lime), FSIS-69-FP (Fruit Punch) and FSIS-69-OR (Orange), Unit of Issue BX50 (Box of 50).

The neck cooling scarves (FSIS-68) are small bandanas with cooling crystals that can be soaked in cool water for 30 minutes and then worn around the neck all day. They are washable and can be reused many times before replacing.

The Sqwinchers are an electrolyte replacement activity drink,

scientifically formulated to replace mineral salts, replenish fluids and sugars at optimal absorption rates, which are depleted as a result of dehydration or through physical exertion. Sqwinchers come in a box of 50 six-ounce foil packets, which also serve as their own cup, and only require adding water and drinking right out of the packet. They come in three delicious flavors, Lemon-Lime (FSIS-69-LL), Fruit Punch (FSIS-69-FP), and Orange (FSIS-69-OR).

Both of these new items were field-tested last summer in a number of large slaughter activities, and reports were that the inspectors loved them, and they really helped provide relief from the intense heat on the slaughter lines. We're delighted to be able to provide these items to help improve conditions of our dedicated work-force during the long, hot summer months. Stay cool out there!

Universal Sound Band No Longer Available

The Universal Sound Band Hearing Protection, Item Number FSIS-11, has been discontinued by the manufacturer. We still have a number of the Sound Bands left in stock, but upon depletion of these, we will be offering a similar item under the same Item Number, which can be used in the same manner as the Sound Band, but can also be folded up to fit into a pocket when not in use. This Item will be referred to simply as a "Banded Ear Plug" set.

Catalog Correction - Print Cartridge for HP Desk Jet 500 Printers

In the April 1998, edition of the Field Supply Catalog, on Page 7 of the Orange Supplies Section, under Print/Toner Cartridges, Items #1105 and #4805 indicate that they are for use in the Desk Jet 500 printer. This is an error. The Desk Jet 500 Printer uses Item #1190 cartridge (Black Ink) and Item #4890 cartridge

(Color). If you have an HP Desk Jet 500 Printer, please note this change in your catalog. Thanks to Dr. Anthony Casacalenda from Marshville, NC, for bringing this error to our attention.

Green File Dividers Available

We discovered another error in the Supply Catalog, this one an error of omission. The Green File Dividers used to separate sections of file folders, Item Numbers 5258 (Tab on the left) and 5266 (Tab in the Middle), were inadvertently left out of the catalog. These are still available, Unit of issue is HD (100). Thanks to Inspector Carrie Matthews from Folcroft, PA, for bringing this omission to our attention.

Laserjet Printer Cartridges Can Be Recycled Too!

by Sue Miller

Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 301-504-4220

In the article "Mailers for Recycled Inkjet Cartridges," April 2000 edition of the *Beacon*, information was provided regarding recycling mailers to be made available for field employees. I want to take this opportunity to let all Hewlett Packard LaserJet printer users know that they can recycle too! When you order a new HP LaserJet printer cartridge for your printer, you receive a pamphlet entitled "Recycling Information." Each pamphlet has a UPS Authorized Return Service label enclosed that can be used to return used printer cartridges to the Cartridge Return Center in Gloucester, VA. Remove the used cartridge from your printer and seal it in the bag your new toner cartridge came in. Place the used cartridge into the new cartridge box, using the internal packing to support the cartridge. Tape the box closed. Remove existing labels from the box and place the UPS Authorized Return Service label on the outside of the box. Enter your name, address, and zipcode in the space

provided. If you did not get the UPS A.R.S. label you can call Hewlett Packard, 1-800-340-2445, and they will send you a label. To ship the cartridge, you can give the shipment to your UPS driver when you receive your next regular delivery or take it to your local UPS receiving point or Mail Boxes Etc. Recycling is beneficial to our environment and we should all do our part.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

FSIS Air Contaminants Program

by Laurie Segna

Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 301-504-4249

One frequently asked question about exposure to air contaminants is, "What OSHA standard requires an establishment to conduct air monitoring (for example, for chlorine)?" Unusual as it may sound, there is no OSHA standard that specifically requires that air monitoring be conducted for the types of chemicals typical found in meat, poultry, and egg product plants.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulates workplace exposures to chemical air contaminants under two different types of standards. The Air Contaminants Standard, 29 CFR 1910.1000, contains exposure limits (known as Permissible Exposure Limits or PELs) for approximately 400 chemicals. These limits are airborne concentrations of a chemical to which most people may be exposed without experiencing adverse health effects. The PELs have been established for both an 8-hour work shift and shorter exposures (15 minute and peak or instantaneous exposures). Some of the chemicals covered by the Air Contaminants standard are chlorine, ammonia, chlorine dioxide, and ozone.

The Air Contaminants Standard requires that an employer "limit an employee's exposure" to the substances contained on the PEL lists through engineering or administrative controls. When such controls are not feasible to achieve full compliance, personal protective equipment may be used to keep employee exposures within the required limits. Although it may be difficult to document this without air sampling, the standard does not specifically require that air sampling be conducted.

OSHA does have requirements for air monitoring in a separate set of standards known as the "substances specific" standards for 29 chemicals. These standards include chemicals such as lead, asbestos, and several carcinogens. Currently, there are no sanitation chemicals that are routinely used in meat, poultry, and egg product plants that are covered by these standards. However, formaldehyde, which is used by FSIS for preserving tissue samples for shipment to the Eastern Laboratory, is regulated by substance specific standard. The requirements for using and handling this chemical will be discussed in a future article.

If you have any questions regarding air contaminants in your workplace, you can contact the Field Safety and Health Specialist assigned to your district or me by e-mail, telephone, or the following address:

USDA, FSIS, ASD, EHSB
Maildrop 5250
5601 Sunnyside Ave - #2-L162D
Beltsville, MD 20705-5250

Tell Me About "Noise and Hearing"

by Harry Thompson

Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 214-767-9124, x-896

Q: What is Noise?

A: Although commonly thought of as unwanted sound, noise is any loud sound that can contribute to hearing loss. Besides the intense

noises that some of us are exposed to in our work situations, all of us are exposed to potentially damaging noise every day from such things as car horns, barking dogs, lawn mowers, and overly loud music.

Q: How does noise affect hearing?

A: Continuous exposure to loud noise can produce hearing loss. Sounds are transmitted as vibrations from the outer ear to the 30,000 delicate hair cells of the inner ear. When exposed to loud sounds, the hair cells vibrate vigorously and sometimes violently. This often results in tinnitus (ringing in the ear) and temporary hearing loss that usually recovers within a day. With continued exposure to loud noise, the temporary hearing loss can become permanent by a destruction of the hair cells. Hearing in the higher pitch range is usually affected first. This often results in a reduction in the clarity of speech, especially in a background of noise.

Q: What noise is too loud?

A: Regular exposure to noise above a decibel level of 85 dBA can permanently damage your hearing. As opposed to a muscle that can be strengthened with over stimulation, your ears do not grow stronger but will sustain greater hearing loss with increased exposure to noise. The table below shows the intensity of some sounds.

0	Barely audible
30	A whisper in a quiet library
60	Normal conversational speech
90	A running lawnmower
100	A chainsaw
115	A rock and roll concert
140	A jet engine
180	Space shuttle lift off

Q: What is Audiometric Testing?

A: In accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's occupational noise exposure standard, an employee exposed to workplace noise that equals or exceeds and 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 dB is entitled to an annual audiometric test. Audiometric test requirements;

1. the hearing test must be pure tone, air-conduction threshold hearing test;
2. the test frequencies must include 500Hz, 1000Hz, 2000Hz, 3000Hz, 4000Hz, and 6000Hz; and
3. the audiogram must contain the test date, the name of the tester, and the make, model, and calibration date of the audiometer.

Audiometric tests are provided at no cost to employees. Audiometric testing can be conducted by on site mobile test units, in-house audiometric testing booths, or by a company in the immediate locality. The audiometric test should be done on government time.

Q: When are hearing protectors required in the workplace?

A: Hearing protectors are required when engineering or administrative controls fail to reduce noise level below the allowable limit. It is FSIS policy to require the wearing of hearing protection if employees are exposed to noise levels that equal an 8-hour time weighted average of 85 dB.

Q: What types of hearing protectors are available.

A: The Agency currently stocks two types of protectors.

Ear Muffs—The noise reduction will vary depending on the size, shape, seal material, shell mass, and type of suspension.

Earplugs—Plugs are another form of ear protection. They are usually made from rubber, plastic, or foam. When using earplugs, follow the directions so that a snug, tight fit is obtained. Never use cotton for the purpose of reducing noise exposure; it does not block out high frequency sounds and does not provide protection.

The following is a current list of the type of hearing protectors available at the Landover Supply Center.

(Item #, Description, NRR (dB))
 FSIS 04EM, Cap-Mounted Muffs, 20
 FSIS 12 Muff, Ear Muffs, 25
 FSIS 11, Univ. Sound Band, 19
 FSIS 12SM, Per Fit Plugs w/cord, 26
 FSIS 12LG, Per Fit Plugs w/cord, 26
 FSIS 12FOAM, E.A.R. Yellow Foam, 29
 FSIS 12FWC, MAX Lite Foam w/cord, 30
 FSIS 12FMLG, MAX Foam w/cord, 33
 FSIS 63, E.A.R. Ultra Fit, 21

VDIP

When to Consider VDIP

by Milo Christianson

Telephone: 612-370-2000

Kathy Welsh

Telephone: 202-720-5657

Labor and Employee Relations Division

The Voluntary Dispute Intervention Program (VDIP) was designed to provide assistance to FSIS employees who are unable to resolve disputes through their own efforts. The program is appropriate for most disputes. There are, however, some criteria to consider when deciding whether or not intervention would be effective. In general, intervention is most effective when:

- Time is an important consideration. In most cases, resolving a dispute through the VDIP will take less time than resolving it through other dispute resolution processes such as grievances and discrimination complaints. However, if either party is seeking a decision, the other methods would be more appropriate since VDIP intervenors do not make decisions for the parties.
- The parties are truly interested in resolving the dispute.

Intervention under the VDIP is a problem-solving process. The objective is to help disputing parties find mutually agreeable solutions to their disputes. It is up to the parties, however, to find their own solutions since, as noted above, the intervenor does not make decisions for the parties. To find their own solutions, the parties must be committed to listening to each other and working together.

- The parties must continue to work together. The VDIP is particularly useful for employees who expect to have a long-term work relationship, and therefore must find ways to work together successfully. The object of intervention under the VDIP is to not only resolve specific issues, but also to improve work relationships by teaching parties how to solve future disputes without third party intervention.

It should be noted that there are a few situations for which intervention under the VDIP would not be appropriate. Perhaps the most common are cases involving either serious misconduct or criminal activity.

If you are having a dispute with a coworker that you have been unable to resolve, please consider the VDIP. The VDIP can be reached by calling 1-800-860-8347. Employees in Headquarters can call 202-205-0066 and employees in Minneapolis can call 612-370-2033.

Note: All district offices, laboratories and other major field offices should have received a memorandum regarding the new Conflict Management Workshop. To schedule a workshop, please contact Robert Zimmermann, Room 3807-S, 1400 Independence Avenue, Washington, DC 20250; telephone 202-720-4937; fax: 202-690-2040.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Leave Transfer Recipients

1. Jackie Copeland
OFO, DC; Illness
2. Annie Stewart
POB, MN; Serious Illness
3. Linda Cole
OPPDE, DC; Serious Illness
4. Sonya West
OPPDE, DC; Maternity
5. Joyce Schultz
POB, MN; Serious Illness
6. Stephanie Showell
OFO, DE; Family Illness
7. Linda Carey
EMS, DC; Surgery
8. Nancy Clyburn
OPHS, DC; Surgery
9. George Olson
OFO, MN; Family Illness
10. Marilyn Weber
FPC, IA; Illness
11. Robert Martz
OFO, IA; Serious Illness
12. Betty Morgan
OFO, AR; Family Illness
13. Carolyn Woolfolk
OFO, DC; Surgery
14. OFO-99-0027
OFO, NC, Surgery
15. Theresa Spoering
OFO, MN; Surgery
16. Tammy Love
OFO, AR; Surgery
17. Sue Engels
OFO, IA; Family Illness
18. Nicole Wareham
OFO, IN; Maternity
19. Michelle Long
OM, DC; Surgery
20. Angela Cuello
OFO, TX; Serious Illness
21. Mona Eder
OFO, IL; Maternity
22. Aurbrey Tribble
OFO, FL; Serious Illness
23. Jacqueline Bonner
OFO, AL; Surgery
24. Denise Bassell
FPC, IA; Illness
25. John French
OFO, GA; Family Illness
26. Victor Varnadoe
OFO, OH; Family Illness
27. OFO-99-0049
OFO, MA; Surgery

28. Tommie Olson
OFO, NE; Surgery
29. Clement Grangier
OFO, MD; Serious Illness
30. OFO-99-0047
OFO, IA; Surgery
31. Mark Spear
OFO, AL; Surgery
32. Dunita Harris
OFO, TX; Maternity
33. James Layman
OFO, OH; Serious Illness
34. Karen Wesson
OFO, DC; Surgery
35. Brandy Blevins
OFO, CA; Serious Illness
36. Vandora Hampton
OFO, VA; Serious Illness
37. OFO-00-0006
OFO, AL; Illness
38. Madge Stone
OFO, DC; Family Illness
39. Carmen Torrent
FSE, DC; Illness
40. OFO-00-0007
OFO, AL; Surgery
41. Jamie Zysset
FO, KS; Maternity
42. OFO-00-0010
OFO, GA
43. Gordon Jones
OFO, TN; Serious Illness
44. Randy Haggard
OFO, TX; Serious illness
45. Vickie Allen
OFO, CA, Serious Illness
46. OFO-AL-0013
OFO, AL, Serious Illness
47. John Buscemi
OM, DC; Surgery
48. Vicki Allen
OFO, CA; Serious Illness
49. Andy Sandoval
OFO, TX; Serious Illness
50. Robert Butler
OFO, MS; Surgery

*While not consenting to the publication of their names, certain LTP recipients are assigned a number that they may provide to their co-workers if they choose so that donated leave may be transferred to their account. Any questions on the LTP should be referred to the Human Resources Field Office on 1-800-370-3747 for field employees and to the Classification and Compensation

Branch for HQ employees on 202-720-6287.

April/May Retirements

Otto P. Ascari, Compliance Offcr, OFO, Richmond, VA, 04/28/00, 34 Years

Virginia P. Bryant, Consumer Safety Inspector, OFO, Camilla, GA, 04/29/00, 15 Years

Laura Y. Covington, Consumer Safety Inspector, OFO, Cumnock, NC, 04/30/00, 30 Years

John W. Esgar, Personnel Mgmt Spec, OFO, Minneapolis, MN, 05/03/00, 31 Years

Frank Farr, Consumer Safety Inspector, OFO, San Francisco, CA, 04/28/00, 26 Years

Betty Sue Golds, FI, OFO, Wilkesboro, NC, 04/28/00, 29 Years

Charles D. Highland, FI, OFO, Lexington, NE, 05/06/00, 7 Years

William J. Jay, FI, OFO, Little Rock, AR, 05/01/00, 31 Years

Kenneth C. Kulus, FI, OFO, Grand Island, NE, 05/01/00, 23 Years

Dale L. Mowry, FI, OFO, Summit, MS, 04/22/00, 10 Years

Don R. Murrah, Consumer Safety Inspector, OFO, Dallas, TX, 05/01/00, 35 Years

Lyle K. Naeve, Consumer Safety Inspector, OFO, Orange City, IA, 04/29/00, 37 Years

Travis E. Nail, Consumer Safety Inspector, OFO, Miami, FL, 05/03/00, 31 Years

Mary F. Phinazee, FI, OFO, Douglas, GA, 04/22/00, 9 Years

Una F. Pitts, FI, OFO, Laurel, MS, 04/29/00, 22 Years

Gordon L. Raspberry, SVMO, OFO, Hastings, NE, 04/30/00, 12 Years

Theodore W. Rutz, Consumer Safety Inspector, OFO, Union City, NJ, 04/29/00, 26 Years

William H. Smith, FI, OFO, Moorefield, WV, 04/28/00, 6 Years

Dawn C. Squires, Consumer Safety Inspector, OFO, Lodi, CA, 04/29/00, 30 Years

Dennis H. Wall, Sr., Consumer Safety Inspector, OFO, Hatfield, PA, 05/06/00, 13 Years

Mildred G. West, SVMO, OFO, Momence, IL, 05/03/00, 30 Years

Death in Service

Mr. Roger W. Forbes, FI, OFO, Williamston, NC, 4/27/00

Supplemental Classification Guide for Evaluating "High Pathology" VMO Positions

by *Dennis O'Malley*
Human Resources Division
Telephone: 202-720-6287

The Department's Office of Human Resources Management has recently approved an Agency supplemental classification guide for use in assessing "high pathology" Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) assignments for possible upgrade from GS-11 to GS-12. This guide was developed over several years by an Agency workgroup with representatives from the Offices of Field Operations, Public Health and Science, and Management, and the National Association of Federal Veterinarians.

The new guide includes background information and three separate sets of criteria to be used for different parts of the evaluation process: one set for use on-site by the Circuit Supervisor of the position being evaluated; a second set for use by the Agency's Senior Pathologist in assessing the significance of the pathology demands; and a third set for the classifier's use in making the final classification decision. The guide also includes two attachments used for data collection: a Survey Questionnaire to be used by the in-plant VMO to report assignment information, and a Certification Worksheet for the Circuit Supervisor's use in documenting his/her findings and recommendation.

Copies of the new guide have been mailed to District Managers, Circuit Supervisors with subordinate veterinarians, and incumbents of Standard Jobs 444 (Supervisory VMO) and 446 (VMO). The SJ-444/446 incumbents are encouraged to review the materials and, if they believe that their assignment

warrants review as a "high pathology" assignment, to complete the Survey Questionnaire as soon as possible and to contact their Circuit Supervisor to schedule an on-site evaluation using Part 1 of the Guide. An incumbent's decision that his/her position does not currently warrant review would not preclude the employee from requesting review at a later date if the situation changes.

Questions regarding application of the guide should be referred to Louise Fox in the Human Resources Field Office in Minneapolis, MN via Outlook or at 612-370-2000.

Child Care Information

by *Michele Clarke*
Human Resources Division
Telephone: 202-720-6617

Listed below are a few child care reference websites accessible via the Internet that can provide helpful information. These websites were recently publicized in a major newspaper. If you are looking for references and resources, these computer links may provide information that can be a starting point in the search for child care. The information and suggestions may assist your efforts in identifying affordable child care and building a database of your own.

If you don't have a computer or ready access to one, please feel free to contact the Work and Family Life Coordinator to discuss your information needs. I would be happy to talk with you about your specific needs. Also, you can obtain a copy of *Child Care Resources Handbook for Federal Employees*, which is an Office of Personnel Management publication. Please contact Michele Clarke, Room 3817 South Building, 14th & Independence Ave, SW, Washington, DC 20515 or telephone 202-720-3880 or 202-720-7983.

www.careguide.com

This site provides a list of day-care centers, child-care services specific to your individual city and state. Phone numbers and addresses will be provided for area providers. You can also list your child's age and care schedule to request a more specific search. This website accesses articles, checklists, and information on babysitters and nannies. You can sign up for a free membership which allows you to set up a Hotlist and take notes online.

www.carefinder.com

Carefinder.com brings you into a database of about 200,000 day care centers and home-based providers by entering your zip code. Listings will include an address and phone number. There is a Parents Resource Room with articles on Choosing Care, Improving the Care Experience, and Child Development. There is also information for child care providers with tips and information on starting and running a child care business.

www.momsonline.com/jobwise/childcare

Moms Online is a bright, shiny website, but it takes a little bit of effort to find your way through to the essential information. Under the title *Moms online* is the heading *Message Boards*. Click on *Message Boards*, and on the left side of the page will appear the words *Job Wise*. Job Wise includes the *Child Care Center*, which offers support from other parents on finding and keeping good child care. It also offers exchange of information on *Your Summer Care Strategy*; *Daycare Pros and Nanny Pros* and *Twelve Simple Rules for Assessing a Child Care Provider*. This section also includes listings for articles on *Child Care: Explore your options*; *Balancing Act: Mastering the Madness*; *Changing Directions: Investigate the Possibilities*. There is a Resource Section that takes you

back to careguide.com (see above), and which also provides a link to *Child Care and Special Needs Children*, which addresses legal issues, referral agencies, educational information, and support organizations for children requiring special resources.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Report on the Workers' Compensation Initiative

by John Campbell
Labor and Employee Relations Division
Telephone: 202-690-1999

The Workers' Compensation Program provides income for employees who are injured on the job. It remains a very beneficial and worthwhile program. Unfortunately, there are individuals that take advantage of this program, leaving their co-workers to pick up a larger share of the workload and jeopardizing the benefits for those who are legitimately injured.

I would like to report the success of the first year of the Workers' Compensation Initiative. The initiative was developed to help find ways to get injured employees back to work sooner and identify any individuals that were defrauding the program and have them prosecuted or removed from the rolls. I also want to let you know that the \$5,000 offer (see Attachment 1) is still alive and well. Anyone who can provide information concerning a former FSIS employee that may be defrauding the Workers' Compensation Program, please call the Hotline.

This first year has been very successful. There were 21 calls on the Hotline to report potential fraud being committed by former FSIS employees. There are presently five cases pending litigation. If these individuals are found guilty, they will be required to pay back to

the Federal Government any compensation they were paid while defrauding the Workers' Compensation Program.

The FSIS program managers in Minneapolis who are responsible for the Workers' Compensation Program have worked very hard this past year to find jobs to offer to those individuals that have been cleared by their doctors to return to work in some capacity. They have contacted District Managers to find alternative jobs for some of these employees. They have also worked with Department of Labor personnel to train some of these individuals for other careers when a position was not available in FSIS. These managers have also worked very hard to review files to determine those individuals who no longer have a work related disability and who should be removed from the Workers' Compensation rolls. Because of the number of individuals that have been placed in jobs and taken off the Workers' Compensation rolls, it has been calculated that a lifetime savings of over 21 million dollars may be realized by FSIS.

We want to thank each one of you who have assisted FSIS this past year in accomplishing this success and look forward to your support this coming year. We encourage employees to get involved. The cash award system is dependent upon the findings of the reported allegations and those findings will dictate the amount of the award. For example, if an employee reports an individual, and after an investigation of the allegations it is determined that there is not enough information to prove fraud, but there is enough information to remove the individual from the Workers' Compensation rolls, the employee reporting the information will be rewarded a portion of the \$5,000.

If you have any questions concerning this initiative you can contact me on 202-690-1999 or by email. My new address is:

USDA, FSIS, OM, L&ERD
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Room 3133, South Building
Washington, DC 20250-3700
Fax: 202-690-1666
24-hour pager: 888-894-6217

CIVIL RIGHTS

Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences Conference

by Perry Davis
Office of Policy Program
Development and Evaluation
Telephone: 202-690-1022

FSIS participated in the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) Fifteenth Annual Career Fair and Training Conference from March 30 to April 1, 2000. Perry Davis and Jennifer Webb of OPPDE and Nisha Oatman of OPHS were representatives for the agency. Cynthia Mercado, Special Assistant for Civil Rights also attended the conference.

MANRRS is a national society and is made up of minority students studying agricultural sciences and related science fields at the high school level; at the undergraduate and graduate level from colleges and universities all over the country; and at the professional level. Its main objective is to foster partnerships between academic institutions, government agencies, and industry seeking to diversify their organization with well-qualified employees.

Each year at the National Conference, all student members of the various MANRRS chapters are given the opportunity to network with other students and professionals, exchange ideas and information, attend workshop and training sessions, visit Career Fair booths, distribute resumes, explore employment opportunities, investigate graduate school

possibilities and seek internships and scholarships.

FSIS purchased a booth for the Career Fair this year. We collected approximately 70 resumes and spoke with some of the brightest students in attendance at the event. Attending this conference was an excellent opportunity for the Agency and its program areas to gain visibility as well as provide employment information to the outside community. Our participation in the conference will also help to accomplish the Agency's mission by ensuring access to the best employees available through recruiting, hiring, training, and recognition of a diverse workforce.

For more information on MANRRS or to request student information feel free to contact the FSIS liaison, Perry Davis on 202-690-1022.

ISSUANCES

Recent Agency Issuances

by Corinne Calhoun
Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 301-504-4233

The following notices have been issued since the April 2000 edition of *The Beacon*. Many recent issuances are available in an electronic format from the "PCDIALS" library in Opendesk and from the "Agency Issuances" public folder in the Exchange mail system (Outlook).

Notice 6-00 (4/5/00)
Diversity on Committees and Task Groups

Notice 7-00 (4/12/00)
Annual Notice to High-Mileage Drivers

Notice 8-00 (4/11/00)
Memorandums of Understanding

Notice 9-00 (4/17/00)
2000 Pay Increase

Notice 10-00 (4/25/00)
Financial Codes for Copier Services

Notice 11-00 (4/26/00)
Shuttle Service – Beltsville to South Building

Notice 12-00 (5/1/00)
Computing Hourly Basic and Overtime Rates

Notice 13-00 (5/2/00)
Airline Ticket Transaction Fee

Notice 14-00 (5/12/00)
Chart of Key Officials – March 2000

Notice 15-00 (5/12/00)
Mandatory Use of Government-Issued Travel Charge Card

Notice 16-00 (5/15/00)
Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Open Season – May 15, 2000 Through July 31, 2000

Directives and notices are distributed automatically to applicable Agency employees and offices. Additional copies are available from:

USDA FSIS ASD P&DS
MAILDROP 5241
5601 SUNNYSIDE AVENUE
BELTSVILLE MD 20705-5241

Telephone: 301-504-4242
Fax: 301-504-4277

PROCUREMENT

Blanket Purchase Agreements and Vendor ID Codes

by Madonna Langley
Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 301-504-4228

In October 1999, the Agency implemented a new Financial Foundation Information System (FFIS). Due to the conversion to FFIS, the Acquisitions and Agreements Section (AAS) must establish a Vendor Identification Code (VID Code) for each purchase order established. This VID Code is

used to establish a remittance address for each vendor.

Many of you have received phone calls from the National Finance Center (NFC) regarding the VID Code and remittance address on invoices which do not match. AAS requests that you inform our office immediately of vendor address changes on your Blanket Purchase Agreements. This will assure that vendor's are getting their payments without delay.

If you would like to know which remittance address is currently assigned for your orders, please contact me for assistance.

HEADQUARTERS SHUTTLE SERVICES

New Direct Shuttle Service - Beltsville - South Building

by Pete Bridgeman

*Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 301-504-4222*

We are pleased to announce that there is now an express shuttle that runs between the George Washington Carver Center in Beltsville, MD, and the South Building. This shuttle makes 5 runs per day in either direction, beginning at 7:00 a.m. in Beltsville. We hope this makes serving our customers in town that much easier, and makes us more accessible to them. See FSIS Notice 11-00, dated 4/26/00, for more details on this new shuttle service.

Priority One Shuttle - Schedule Change Coming Soon

The Priority One Shuttle, which currently runs between the South Building and West End Court,

Franklin Court and "L" Street, will be operating under a new schedule when the FSIS tenants at Franklin Court move to the Aerospace Building. The latest update on this move is that it will occur around the end of July. We have circulated some preliminary schedule change proposals to riders at West End Court and "L" Street and received some feedback. At this time, it appears that 3 additional runs will be added to the schedule for each direction, and we have been requested to move the driver's lunch break up an hour, so he would go to lunch at 11:30 instead of 12:30, and make a run from West End Court to the South Building between 12:30 and 1:00. This would enable people to make a 1:00 meeting at the South Building without having to go over before lunch, or take another form of transportation. We will finalize the new schedule when we have a more definite date for the Franklin Court move. If you would like to see a draft schedule change proposal and provide input, please contact us at the above listed number.

Priority One Services Honored at OSDBU Small Business Awards Ceremony

Priority One Services was honored by the Department's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) with the "Small Disadvantaged Business Contractor of the Year" award at the OSDBU Award Ceremony held on May 23, 2000. FSIS had nominated Priority One for this award.

Priority One has demonstrated outstanding performance in the delivery of this shuttle service. Despite numerous traffic problems, particularly in the past year, with increased street repairs and

construction in the downtown area that this shuttle serves, this 8(a) contractor has consistently striven to deliver quality transportation in a timely manner, making every effort to overcome the many difficulties in meeting a demanding schedule. Through good communication and a desire to improve the service, the contractor has worked closely with FSIS to develop a revised schedule that was both more realistic and still met the needs of the employees it serves.

Our riders have since been able to count on the shuttle being there when it is supposed to be. Whenever traffic conditions have created unavoidable delays, the contractor has communicated these problems to FSIS immediately, allowing us to communicate the delays to our riders in a timely manner through Outlook. In addition to the outstanding service in terms of meeting the schedule and working with FSIS to improve the schedule, we have also received consistently positive feedback from our riders regarding the cheerful disposition of the shuttle driver. Our congratulations go out to this outstanding contractor for this well-deserved recognition.

**To comment on this newsletter or
to submit an article for
publication, please contact:**

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The current and past editions of *The Beacon* are available electronically on the FSIS OpenDesk and Exchange mail systems as well as on the FSIS Website at: www.fsis.usda.gov/om/adserv.htm

ATTACHMENT 1

\$5,000 CASH AWARD

Anyone who defrauds the Workers' Compensation Program gets what they deserve...

...and you can help. Food Safety and Inspection Service will recommend anyone who reports information resulting in a conviction of a person defrauding the workers' compensation program for up to a \$5,000 cash award.

To report OWCP fraud, call:

1-800-370-3747

Human Resources Field Office



ATTACHMENT 2

**C, F, and G Fund Monthly Returns
May 8, 2000**

Months	C Fund	S&P 500 Stock Index	F Fund	Lehman Brothers U.S. Aggregate Bond Index	G Fund
1995 (Jan. - Dec.)	37.41%	37.58%	18.31%	18.47%	7.03%
1996 (Jan. - Dec.)	22.85%	22.96%	3.66%	3.63%	6.76%
1997 (Jan. - Dec.)	33.17%	33.36%	9.60%	9.65%	6.77%
1998 (Jan. - Dec.)	28.44%	28.58%	8.70%	8.69%	5.74%
1999 (Jan. - Dec.)	20.95%	21.04%	(0.85%)	(0.82%)	5.99%
1999	%	%	%	%	%
April	3.86	3.87	.29	.32	.46
May	(2.36)	(2.36)	(0.89)	(0.88)	.47
June	5.54	5.55	(0.33)	(0.32)	.49
July	(3.14)	(3.12)	(0.43)	(0.42)	.52
August	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.05)	(0.05)	.53
September	(2.78)	(2.74)	1.15	1.16	.51
October	6.34	6.33	.38	.37	.53
November	2.00	2.03	(0.01)	(0.01)	.51
December	5.90	5.89	(0.45)	(0.48)	.54
2000					
January	(5.03)	(5.02)	(0.34)	(0.33)	.56
February	(1.93)	(1.89)	1.22	1.21	.53
March	9.74	9.78	1.32	1.32	.55
April	(2.98)	(3.01)	(0.29)	(0.29)	.52
Last 12 Months *	9.99	10.13	1.27	1.26	6.43

Percentages in () are negative.

The C Fund is invested in the Barclays Equity Index Fund which tracks the S&P 500 stock index. The F Fund is invested in the Barclays U.S. Debt Index Fund which tracks the Lehman Brothers U.S. Aggregate bond index. The G Fund is invested in special issues of U.S. Treasury securities.

The monthly C, F, and G Fund returns represent net earnings for the month, after deduction of accrued administrative expenses. The C and F Fund returns also reflect the deduction of trading costs and accrued investment management fees.

The C, F, and G Fund monthly returns are dollar-weighted: they reflect net earnings on the changing balances invested during the month.

*** The C, F, and G Fund returns for the last twelve months assume, except for the crediting of earnings, unchanging balances (time-weighting) from month to month and assume earnings are compounded on a monthly basis.**

The C and F Fund returns vary from the index returns because of C and F Fund expenses, changing balances in the C and F Funds, and differences in returns between the Barclays funds and the underlying indexes. The index returns are time-weighted: they assume constant dollar balances invested during each month and throughout the period.

Future performance of the three funds will vary and may be significantly different from the returns shown above. See the "Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan" for detailed information about the funds and their investment risks.

